

# K-475 Last Days Tumult

by Art Katz

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*Art Katz discusses the challenges and spiritual preparations required for believers in the last days, emphasizing the role of the Holy Spirit and the necessity of discipleship amidst affliction.*

**Duration:** 53:15

**Scripture:** Mark 13:19-20, Acts 16:6-7, Acts 16:9-10, Acts 16:13, Acts 16:16, Acts 16:25-26

**Topics:** "Last Days"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of maintaining joy and praising God even in the midst of adversity. He uses the example of Paul and Silas in the book of Acts, who were imprisoned and beaten but still prayed and sang praises to God. The speaker encourages the audience to let their joy be evident to others, especially in times of suffering, as it can have a powerful impact on those around them. He also highlights the significance of the baptism of the Holy Spirit in enabling believers to maintain joy and praise in difficult circumstances.

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## Transcript

Another way the Lord will quicken certain things right on the spot and use little inauspicious things like a button that somebody's wearing on their lapel and the scriptures that the Spirit induces a man to read to move you in a certain direction. How many people know what I'm talking about? It's called being led of the Spirit. As I came in here today, there was a young chap wearing a button.

It said, The Great Snatch. And it showed a pair of pants and a pair of shoes just passing out of sight, being lifted up into sweet oblivion. Then our brother read certain scriptures, and as he was reading them, my eye fell on passages which I suppose that I'd read before, but the Lord just chose this moment for me to see them in a little pointed way that I hadn't before noticed.

So let's turn back to Mark, the 13th chapter, 19th verse, For in those days shall be affliction such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be. And except the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved. But for the elect's sake whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days.

Does that sound to you as if we're going to be snatched out? It's as if we're--I'm not a theologian, guys, so I won't presume to announce anything, but I always have a rather queasy feeling about The Great Snatch. And my experience now, and the direction in which the Lord is leading me, seems to suggest everything to

the contrary. I mean, the Lord has given me visions also, the most recent of which was a vision to establish conferences on discipleship, and that young people especially, and those who are committed and really want to walk with God, might understand what it is that's going to be required from them in this day and to begin to shape themselves by the grace of God to be fitted for this day.

That doesn't seem economical of a Jewish God to deal with people in that way if we're just going to be--in those days shall be affliction. Well, how many of you precious young people have ever tasted of any affliction in your life at all? Any affliction, have you? At least my claim to fame was that I was a depression baby. We actually knew real want, real privation, real struggle, just for physical existence.

And some of the other gray heads and older people in the audience this morning can remember those days. But you know that your generation is about the most spoiled, the most grossly indulged, softest, probably in the history of all civilization. I think it's rather ironic that Jesus says in the 30th verse, verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass till all these things be done.

The 24th verse, but in those days after that tribulation the sun shall be darkened and the moon shall not give its light and the stars of heaven shall fall and the powers that are in the heaven shall be shaken. And then they that shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory, and then shall he send his angels and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost parts of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven. Then after those days shall he send his angels to select, to gather up.

I just have to say again that I'm not a theologian and I don't want to suggest any definitive statement about what the character of those days is going to be, but I have just a pre-sentiment, a sense that if we're not going to pass through the whole of it, we're certainly going to pass through a portion of it. And I believe it's going to have something to do with purifying the body of Christ, with preparing that bride that will be without spot and without wrinkle. How many of you young people are conscious this morning that the bride of Christ and the body of Christ is very far yet from that condition? Many corruptions, right? Many fleshly carnal things.

Much that is passed in the name of Christianity is hardly better than mere entertainment, shallow, casual. And perhaps it is because of the kind of ministry that the Lord has given us, university campuses and encounters with atheistic groups, with radicals, with Jewish people like myself, that we begin to get a sense of what the sharp response of men is going to be to the gospel in the last days. I think the issue is becoming joined and heretofore the world has looked upon us with a kind of nonchalance.

We've fitted in quite well. We've condoned the establishment. We've sanctified establishment life.

They could safely allow us to go about our little Christian business on Sunday because we didn't threaten a thing. But I tell you that when the walk becomes more intense, when the issue will become more severely joined, when the centrifugal forces which are now at work on the earth, polarizing and sucking people into one of two great centers, light or darkness, when these forces are more revealed, when men will see that the neutral ground is fast disappearing and they're going to be required to make radical commitment to one or the other, I think we're going to see more and more men railing, gnashing their teeth. We're going to experience what the scriptures describe, that those who live godly lives in Christ will suffer persecution.

And I just want to share with you some observations out of a text in the scriptures, which the Lord has really quickened to my heart in the 16th chapter of the book of Acts, because I love to see in the scriptures the pattern of God, the way of God. And I realized that the things that are written here are not just mere historical descriptions of episodes from the lives of Jewish men who served him, but a real framework, a pattern, an indication of things which must be and always are. And I can't begin to share with you my experience and the things which the Lord has pressed into my own heart, but I can just say it with finality and you just wait on your own heart and spirit.

Guys, not a cotton-picking thing has changed. Nothing. Not a thing has changed.

The issues are exactly the same as it was in the days of Jesus. The forces that are a contention are just as severely in contention now. We've gone through a 19th century kind of semambulism and sleepwalk, but in the end of the ages, the cover is being lifted back and we're going to see the same kinds of things that punctuated and characterized the ministry of Jesus and the disciples which followed him.

Interesting that every one of them suffered the fate of martyrs. Interesting that the word for witness in Greek means martyr. And so I just want to strike a very somber note from the beginning.

Will you excuse me? I'm just not one of the rah, rah, rah guys. And you might just be able to shake this off after an hour or two as the meetings go on, but I've got to speak the thing which is in my heart. I'll tell you the kind of feeling I have, that there's a great corollary between, as we know, the natural and the spiritual worlds.

And we know that in the world of nature, there's a great process of attrition. A fish can spawn many thousands of eggs and out of these, perhaps only several hundred will survive the initial process of birth. And of those hundreds, many fewer will survive the first stages of life to become fingerlings.

And of these, most will be condemned or will condemn themselves to live out their little stunted lives around the periphery of great bodies of water, living in the shallows and the scum. But one or two will forge out into the deep to take all of the attendant risks that come with launching out into the deep and also enable themselves to enjoy that process that leads to full growth and maturity. But they have to survive the risks that come with predators and sportsmen.

And maybe out of all the initial birth of thousands of eggs, one will survive to come to full maturity that it might reproduce itself. And I got that same kind of sneaky suspicion that's exactly true of the things which are spiritual. Frankly, guys, I'm just a little bit wary of the enormous popularity that Jesus is enjoying in our day.

He's just so groovy that I can hardly recognize that Jesus, who had not a place to lay his head, from whom hundreds turned when he said that you must eat of my flesh and drink of my blood, when even his choiceless disciples who walked with him for three and a half years fled from him in the time of his greatest crisis and affliction, would not even believe the accounts of his resurrection from the lips of firsthand witnesses. I got a feeling there's going to be a great process of attrition take place, and many that are on the bandwagon today grooving with Jesus are not going to survive the enormous, what can I say, trial and testing that's going to come in our day. So I'm speaking today to prepare you for an hour which is not yet struck, okay? And I'm choosing the 16th chapter of the book of Acts because I believe that it gives us a pattern that we're going to see duplicated.

And it's just an ordinary day in the lives of two Jews for Jesus, doing their Jewish thing, serving their most high God. And they're about doing the thing which the Lord commanded them, to preach the gospel. Now, we begin with the sixth verse.

Now, when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia and were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia, after they would come to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit allowed them not. And they, passing by Mysia, came down at Troas, and a vision appeared to Paul in the night. There stood a man of Macedonia beseeching him and saying, come over into Macedonia and help us.

I think we ought to pause there. First, to remind you that I'm doing gross injustice to the word of God by this kind of glib and casual reading, but I believe that this is the kind of reading that characterizes the reading that most of us do. We don't give the word of God the extreme reverence and care that it deserves.

We were instructed to live by every word which proceeds out of the mouth of God. And I think that many of us are missing the deep things which God has inserted in this word by our very casualness in just breezing through it. I believe that my first year as a believer was wasted because I brought to the word of God the same kind of slick and shallow habits that I had developed in the academic world, and I even was so presumptuous as to think that I had to interpret the scripture as I interpreted Shakespeare and Milton and other writings.

It was a wasted year. I spun my wheels in vain until the Lord brought me up short and I realized that this is not just literature. This is the word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.

I began to take it with the seriousness and earnestness it deserves, and to do it, my life started to become radically transformed. You know that we just read of three manifestations of the Holy Spirit, three very vital manifestations that those of us who are in the dimension, the charismatic full gospel dimension, ought most of all to acknowledge, to respect, to celebrate. Being filled with the Holy Spirit is more than just elation.

It's an enormous equipment for service, and I just began this morning by just describing the very modest way by which the Spirit of God was already operating in me to direct me to speak and to be a channel for him to address you in a given way. Just by allowing my eye to fall on a button, just by having my spirit quickened by the reading of certain scriptures, and by a certain weight settled on my heart by the Holy Spirit. Now look at this first verse, guys.

We talk about the Holy Spirit, and we always think of the Spirit as one that leads us, but here's the Spirit of God which checks us. It says they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia, and you say, aren't impossible. The Spirit of God is not going to contradict the word of God.

Didn't we have commandment to go into all the world and preach this gospel to every creature? Well, I want to tell you something about the Spirit of God. That we ought to be prepared at any given moment for the Spirit of God so to lead us, even for God to set aside the things which we think and know are established in his word. The Spirit of God can do anything in and through that vessel yielded to him, and what is in fact the great hindrance to the receiving of the baptism of the Holy Spirit among denominational people in our generation? They've got certain fixed principles which in a sense really are biblical, which prevent them from understanding and entering into a dimension which God has for them.

The Spirit of God is always in the last analysis. God's current choice voice to move, to direct, to check, to stop. I was telling an Assemblies of God pastor last night how at a church of that denomination, the Spirit of God bade me to mock a congregation, and you say, all right, now I know you flip.

The Spirit of God is loving, and he'll never mock his own people, and I tell you that with every breath in my body and anything I know about God, the Spirit of God passed through my mouth and mocked a congregation that had just sung a really rosy song full of clapping of hands and full of lifted up spirits, we need Jesus, you need Jesus, I need Jesus, and I tell you, I looked out on that congregation of seemingly healthy folk, and the young choir was singing full of gusto and verve, and I thought, man, I have need to be ministered to of them, but when I opened my mouth, it was God who mocked them, I need Jesus, you need Jesus, and following that was like a sword proceeding forth into the bosom of that people, one word, really? And people go, catching their breath, all of that audience, because the Lord zapped them, and I went on to speak just like a fool, what do you need him for? Take up an offering, play a church, preach a pretty little sermon, do a little singing, we don't need him for that, people, we need him in the extremity, we need him when we're utterly obedient to follow him in the places to which he shall lead us, we need him when we're utterly over our own heads, when our power and our own human resources and intellect and heart and courage are wanting, but how many of us have ever been so led by the Spirit to places like that? It's no longer the groovy Christianity, it far more resembles the book of Acts, that's when we need him, and I'll tell you one of my greatest disappointments as a young believer, taking up my place in a Pentecostal congregation eight years ago, was the failure to see the correspondence in the life of that church and its place in the community, and the book of Acts, which I believe was the normative standard of conduct and service for believers. The God of the book of Acts has not changed one bit, but we have. There's a Spirit of God that's sovereign, who can not only lead, but check.

My first such experience as that came at a college, actually a Pentecostal college, where I always trembled at what would happen if the Lord would have to use me to cast out a demon spirit. I didn't mind laying on hands for healing, because you can always safely walk away from that with your pride intact, you don't have to see the necessary evidence on the spot, it's an easy and sometimes a cheap thing to do. But one who's bound and needs to be set free is quite another thing.

I thought that the spirits would turn and rend me and say, Jesus I know and Paul I know, but cats who? God has given us a name which is above every name, but do we actually have the authority to exercise it? Are we so separated from the world? We've come out and we've touched not the unclean thing and he's been made a father unto us, we are his sons and his daughters, and we speak and do with an authority that is something more than the mechanical citation of the name of Jesus. So right in the college one night about one o'clock in the morning, I'd been up all through the day, I was the chapel speaker, I was counseling kids, and that night there was a devotional thing in the dormitory, and I was coming back to my bunk just weary, and would you believe it, one o'clock in the morning in that narrow hallway, there's a student reading the book and I thought, that's unusual. And the hallway was so narrow, I brushed shoulders with this guy, and he said, oh hi Mr. Cantor, I said, hi fellow.

And I just had one or two pleasant words with him, I said good night, and I started to walk on all of a sudden, click, I was checked by the spirit. I said, say, do you want to talk to me about anything? Oh no, he said. I said, are you sure, well yeah.

Well then good night, good night. I started to walk again, click. I said, are you sure that you don't have something that you want to share with me? Well he said, not something that you'd probably really be

interested in.

I said, are you walking this way? He said, yeah. And I said, well just walk with me. We began to walk with me, we hadn't walked 50 paces, when this kid who was the son of a minister told me that he was on the verge of suicide, that he was possessed by spirits of murder, and anger, and bitterness, which he could not control, and he was at the end of his rope.

And something in my heart went dum-da-dum-dum. I knew that the Lord had backed me into a corner. You know, people, I'm just as chicken as most, and I see that it's always been the Lord backing me into corners.

In fact, I was saved by being backed into a corner. I was backed into a corner in Jerusalem by having gotten on a mistaken bus to find myself lost, and walked into a bookstore for directions to find out that it was a bookstore selling New Testaments and Bibles, operated by Jewish believers in the Messiah, a Pentecostal Jewish assembly. And it was in that bookstore that the Lord spoke to me and told me that I was not to leave.

He backed me into a corner. And every act of service, and every kind of commitment, it's almost the same kind of thing. God was behind me doing this.

While I prayed with that boy, I knew that there was only one remedy. I laid hands upon him, and in the name of Jesus, I took authority against the spirit of murder, spirit of suicide, and I don't know what else, that the Spirit of God inspired me to pray. And I left him at that chapel, and I walked across campus the next morning, and I saw a guy coming toward me, and he looked familiar, yet he was not familiar.

And sure enough, it was the same guy, but he bore a new face, just joyous, brimming with life. It had worked. So be prepared, people, as you walk on with God, that there's a spirit that'll not only beckon you, go, there's a spirit that may likely beckon you, stop.

Be checked, be redirected. The Spirit allowed them not, and a vision appeared to Paul in the night. There stood a man of Macedonia beseeching him and saying, come over into Macedonia and help us.

And maybe you're saying, gee, I've never had a vision like that. Let me give you a little clue. There are a lot of us who have never had any of these manifestations of the Holy Spirit.

You say, but Art, why? Well, I've got a few things I'd like to suggest, that such manifestations as these only come to a choice few, those who are prepared to obey. Because look at the next verse. And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel unto them.

Brother, that's what it means to be a Jew, is to receive vision of God and immediately endeavor to go. No if, ands, but, whys, or hows. And how many of us will say, gee, I don't know about that vision.

Maybe it was indigestion. Maybe it was too much pastrami and corned beef. I better wait to see that this is confirmed and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

How come that they knew instantly that this was of God? I'll tell you how come. Because their walk was such that they were familiar with the still, small voice. Walking in the Spirit is not something that's accomplished in a day.

It's a walk. And I tell you, it begins right where you are now. And if you are insensitive to hearing that still, small voice of God and run roughshod over it in things that pertain to your life now, how then shall you hear when he speaks even more inaudibly and more dangerously, summoning you to places of service that might require your life? I spoke at a college campus outdoors in a public meeting, big crowd and noise and tumult, and had been speaking about the still, small voice of God.

And when it was over, some of these kids came up to me and were really curious about this. What do you mean by the still, small voice? Are you putting us on? I don't speak about the still, small voice lightly. I heard it that day in Jerusalem, and it turned my life around because it called me by name and commanded me not to leave.

I've heard that voice since, on platforms waiting to be called upon to speak, and in various other times of ministry and service. I know it's a very real voice. They said, well, how do you know it's God's voice and not Satan's? Good question, isn't it? And just as that question was asked, there was a big, shaggy mutt wending its way through that plaza, that campus, and it wasn't just aimlessly wandering.

It was on target. It was going somewhere. I said to these guys, look at that dog.

In all of this great crowd and all of this tumult and noise and all of this distraction, that dog is not one whit distracted. It's going exactly to where it knows it needs to go. It has heard its Master's voice.

Out of all of that great tumult of voices, it's picked out its Master's voice. Do we have the kind of devotion that animals have, with their tongues rolling out of their mouths, palpitating and panting, just to be in the presence of their Master, savoring that presence, knowing Him in a way that is beyond words, anticipating even the wishes of a Master, not just waiting for His direct commandments, hearkening to His voice, desiring to be at His side, always prepared to do His bidding. God helped us to be as devoted to Him as shaggy animals are to men who are not worthy of it.

How many of us have seen a vision of a man beckoning us to come over into Macedonia and help? You know why I think we don't see it? How many of us are in a position to do it? How many can come to Macedonia and bring help? How many of us, far more, need help ourselves? How much of our own prayer life is occupied with the distress of our own personal lives and our fallings and stumblings and backslidings and indecision and weakness and all the rest of these things? Children, the vision of God comes and the Spirit of God beckons those who will immediately endeavor to go and those whose lives are so ordered and disciplined in God that they can bring help. And let's just follow on to see what the consequence of obedience results in. Therefore, losing in the 11th verse from Triumphs, we came with a straight course to Samothracea and the next day to Neapolis and from there to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia.

See, wherever the Spirit of God leads us is where the action is. It's the chief city. It may be to an audience of one or two.

It might be to some little hick town. It might be to New York City. It might be to Jerusalem.

But wherever God leads you, you can be assured that's where the action is. And there's a God who delights in those who set forth with a straight course to reach it. I was speaking last night about some guy that visited me in Kansas City.

I guess you would call him a Jesus freak or whatever, hair down his shoulders, barefoot, his shirt unbuttoned down to his navel. Jesus plastered all over that shirt and real groovy and swinging and loved the Lord, quote unquote, and told me that he wanted to work with me and he wanted to be a missionary to the Jewish people. He thought that that would be just groovy.

I said, well, what background have you had? What experience have you had? Well, nothing. What's been your most recent work? Well, I was a dishwasher. How long did that last? About a week.

Well, have you gone to college? Well, I copped out or quit in my freshman year. Were you in the service? Yeah, but I lasted a few months and I was discharged. I said, what have you ever done that's systematic and disciplined? And he said, nothing.

I don't think that that man is prepared to enter a ministry that's very demanding. There's a God who wants us to set forth with a straight course. And you young kids who are in school, a lot of you, when I speak with you in colleges and places like that, you sort of suggest, gee, when I get out of school, when life will begin, what's the Lord's will for me? And then you ask questions like that.

And I'm always constantly amazed that you don't recognize that right where you are now, right in school and right in your present situation and right in your present relationships with friends, classmates, teachers, and parents. You have every opportunity to come to a place of discipline, of a controlled life, of maturity, that when the vision of God beckons you, you can bring help to men. And so as we read on, we read that they went to, on the Sabbath in the 13th verse, to a, out of the city by the riverside where prayer was accustomed to be made.

And we sat down and spoke unto the women who resorted there. Isn't it funny? You know, I never understood that, why they would be led outside the city. My natural instinct would have been to have gone to the greatest synagogue to see what opportunity I would have had there.

But the Spirit of God led them in a place where the natural mind does not dictate. And those of us who call ourselves full gospel have got to understand that, that this is when the Spirit of God is all about. To be filled with the Spirit, to be empowered by the Spirit, and to be led by the Spirit, even to foolish places that contradict our own reason and understanding.

And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple of the city of Thyatira, who worshipped God, heard us, whose heart the Lord opened that she attended unto the things which were spoken by Paul. And when she was baptized and her household, she besought us, saying, If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there. And she constrained us.

I just can't help but take a moment, before passing on from these beautiful verses, just to remind you what kind of a woman this is. What a refreshing contrast with the kinds of indecisive believers that we see in our own day. Wishy-washy, lukewarm, compromised.

This woman was decisive, whose heart the Lord opened that she attended to the things which were spoken, attending to the things which were spoken. You know, I went to Hebrew school as a kid. We all have to perform that chore to prepare us for our thirteenth year of Bar Mitzvah.

It was a drag. And I tried to play hooky whenever I could, and I used to sit in that class just like a zombie, dead. But I remember, after being there for years, one day a new kid came into a class, and he was just a few months short of his thirteenth birthday.

And he was going to make up in a few months what I had been laboring for six years to learn. And I had a revelation of what it means to become a student. This kid, in a sense, spiritually rolled up his sleeves and unbuttoned his shirt and began to dig in and to learn the alphabet, aleph, vet, vet, gimel, dala, tevav, and my eyes just went pink.

I saw a guy who was diligently applying himself to learn. He attended to the things which were spoken by an active assertion, a conscious act of will. And in a moment, I was made to realize that all my school years, not only in the Hebrew school, but even in secular school, I've been sitting like a lump, and by osmosis, I was just allowing a little kind of nonsense to infiltrate my consciousness.

I wonder how many of us are guilty of that kind of thing, even in churches, even in our congregations and assemblies, even when we hear the Word of God. Are we consciously extending ourselves? Are we attending to the things which are spoken? Because look at the response, and when she was baptized, isn't that fantastic? Isn't the Bible as beautiful for what it leaves out as for what it says? No ifs, ands, buts, whys. She attends to the things which are spoken.

She knows the truth of God. She was baptized immediately, and her household. I want to tell you guys that we Jews have some, I think, a deeper recognition of the profundity of baptism than most Christians, because a Jewish kid can come home from school and say to his mom, Mom, I believe that Jesus is the Messiah, and his mother will say, That's nice, Irving.

Sit down and eat your lunch. Or they'll come home a few weeks later and say, Mom, I've been baptized into Jesus Christ. She'll say, You're no longer my son.

You're dead. Baptism is death. It's going down into the deep waters of death.

They come up and cover your head. You're going six feet under, death to self, to the world, to the devil, and coming up unto resurrection of newness of life. It's interesting that if you want to apply as a Jew for immigration to Israel, they ask you what your religious identification is, and you can say Messianic Judaism or something like that, but the real nitty-gritty question is, Have you been baptized? Because if you've been baptized, you've been sealed off from the world, from Judaism, from tradition, from culture, and you've been entered into another dimension, which is hostile and at enmity with the world.

This woman who attended the things which were spoken was baptized in her household. What commitment! And look at this. She constrains these dangerous Jewish radicals to come into her house and to abide there.

Well, you know, in a couple of days, they're going to be leaving town, but she's going to remain. And there's a stigma and a public reproach, not only for her public baptism, but for having taken these dangerous radicals into her own home. I tell you guys, that's a refreshing example.

It's a vision that God is holding up against our eyes, that we might be reminded of what commitment means in an age that's so wishy-washy and so indecisive that just about anything goes. And it came to pass as we went to prayer, a certain maid presented with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much gain by soothsaying. And the same followed Paul and us and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the Most High God and show unto us the way of salvation.

And this did she many days, but Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour." Just an ordinary, everyday

episode in the life of a New Testament believer. Paul being grieved turned.

It wasn't that Paul was irritated by this distraction. He was grieved. He was broken in his heart for a woman who was possessed of satanic spirits, whose life was not her own.

And I tell you, I believe that that's one of the conditions for ministry of healing deliverance. It's a faith which worketh by love. Not that we're bugged or irritated, but that we're grieved for the broken condition of men who need to be set free.

It's faith that operates by that love which will set the captives free. And I just want to show you what the consequence of this kind of New Testament obedience and walk is. Because when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas and drew them into the marketplace and unto the rulers and brought them to the magistrates saying, These men being Jews do exceedingly trouble our city and teach customs which are not lawful for us to receive, needs to observe being Romans.

And the multitude rose up together against them and the magistrates tore off their clothes and commanded to beat them. And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely, who having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison and made their feet fast in the stocks. I tell you that we're not going to win the Junior Chamber of Commerce award for being children of God, but more likely we're going to experience what these men experienced.

When we walk in the power of the Holy Spirit with the same anointing that Jesus knew to set the captive free and bring the good news to give health to the lame, we're going to find ourselves touching the world system right at its core. And there's going to be a howl and a shriek and a gnashing of teeth. We're going to be dragged before rulers in high places, in the marketplace, in the establishment, in the whole world system.

And the mob will be against us. We're going to find ourselves humiliated, the clothes torn from our backs, beaten, cast into dungeons, be bound hand and foot. That's the reward of the obedience for following the Holy Spirit.

I believe that this is a pattern of God which we should realistically anticipate in our own walk. And you wonder, what did Paul and Silas do after that? To find themselves in this dungeon with their backs hanging in strips in pain? I was in the dungeon which Paul lived his last days in Rome. And I had a stoop up, I couldn't stand the wreck.

And the black walls glistened with sweat. And even centuries after its use as a prison, there was still the sickly smell of urine. And one could imagine the scurrying of rats with a little light flickering in that terrible, overwhelming darkness.

That's where Paul wrote some of his greatest epistles. A dungeon is not a pretty place, let alone a sick area, as men are doing right now, as we're sitting in this gorgeous place, in dungeons today, in ugly places of confinement, behind the iron curtain. Suffering, beating, humiliated, strapped to crosses, having other prisoners defecate over their faces, being compelled to serve communion with human feces and urine.

Only a beginning of the kind of affliction which God said would come in the last days. I wonder if we're preparing ourselves for such eventualities as that. It may be that we may never be required to experience it.

But I think it's best to prepare ourselves for the reality of what we suspect might come upon us. How did Paul and Silas respond then? Did they say, Oh God, what happened? I thought I was being obedient to the Holy Spirit. And look what's happened.

They've thrown us into this jail. We've been beaten. We're sitting in pain.

Where did we go wrong? Because a lot of us have suffered much less things than having our backs bloodied and being reproached and persecuted by the world. We didn't get the grade we wanted on an examination, or we were stood up by a boyfriend, or our parents have misunderstood our motives or intentions, and we mope, and we're forlorn, and we're sad, and we're distressed, and our faces hang down. What then shall we do if we react that way now, when we shall come to situations like this? How did these men react? I think one of the greatest verses in the whole of Scripture comes in the 25th verse of the 16th chapter.

At midnight, Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God. Wow. Well, that's one thing to pray and to sing praises in full gospel conventions.

Hallelujah. What a wonderful spirit. What a camaraderie.

All the wonderful bear hugs and embraces. And isn't it great? But to be able to do it in a dungeon, bound hand and foot, with a back that's bloody and raw, having been publicly humiliated, if you can sing praises then, you've got it all together. And I'll tell you guys, this is what the baptism of the Holy Spirit is about.

It's not that we might just have it, but that we might have joy and a basis for worship, not just when things are going good, but in the depths of our utmost crisis and severity and extremity. One of the most brilliant testimonies that I ever read for speaking with other tongues came from the wife of Richard Wurmbbrand, that Jewish minister who was 13 years in a communist prison camp, three and a half years in solitary confinement. His wife herself was, I believe, seven years also in prisons.

And there came a time when she would not rack and would not give the information that these communist authorities wanted about the other believers in their Romanian community. And they tortured that woman. They put her through the mill.

And the last thing they did was the ultimate torture. They put her in a box, a box with spikes in it, that you could neither stand fully erect, nor could you sit, nor could you slump, because the moment you leaned against the side, these things began to pierce into your flesh. The box was dark, barely enough air to breathe.

It was suffocating. Our hearts even began to palpitate and pound just hearing a description of this, let alone to have experienced it. The kind of thing that made many prisoners go mad.

And they left them in that box for days. And she said that she went out of her mind. The fear gripped her in that terrible darkness and confinement.

She could no longer think. She couldn't remember scripture verses. But in the depth of her extremity, she heard something well up from the depths of her being.

And she heard herself praising God in the language of praise and worship. And that sustained her sanity. God has given us an exquisite, exquisite and precious gift of the Spirit.

And I know for myself, and probably for many of you, I sprang for a long time, that I might have it. And once I had it, I kind of just languished back into the same kind of casual state as before I had it. But the Lord showed me after a long time of disuse, when I sat one day on my couch, four o'clock in the morning in Kansas City, having been called to that city to establish words for the Jews, and to be filled with frustration and defeat, still waiting to see the effects of my labors.

I said, Lord, is this speaking with tongues something worth having? Has this got anything to do with service? Do I need the operation of this in my life? If this is something more than just a kind of a flourish, and more than just an it, I ask you right now, as I sit in this dark house on this couch in my gotgas and my underwear, to loose my tongue. And I began right then, having the Spirit revived in me, and began to worship the Lord with other tongues. Guys, don't treat lightly the precious and exquisite things which God has given you, and understand truly what its purpose is.

An instrument of worship is a gift by which we can supplicate and groan in the Spirit, that the Lord might have transacted upon earth such things as we are describing today out of his Word, through ordinary vessels like ourselves. Because you know what that twenty-fifth verse ends with? It says that they sang praises unto God, and prayed, and the prisoners heard them. Hallelujah.

I tell you, you can take all of the so-called witnessing in the world, and all of the four spiritual laws, and every evangelistic crusade, and all of that hokum, and send it out down the river in a raft, and it won't begin to provide the results that will come when prisoners will hear our praise in the moment of adversity and crisis. You want kids to be saved in your classes? You let them see a face that's filled with joy, not just when things are going well, but when they know that you're suffering affliction and distress. How is your joy then? How is your spirit then? How are you abounding then? Have the prisoners heard you? Or what are they hearing from you? The same kind of gossip and glib things which they themselves speak, or there's something being emitted from your heart and mouth that will turn the prisoners to recognize that indeed there's a living God.

I tell you, I have every confidence to meet every prisoner who shared those cells with Paul and Silas in eternity in heaven before God, because the prisoners heard this. And it says, suddenly there was a great earthquake so that the foundations of the prison were shaken, and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's bands were loosed, because God inhabits the praises of his people, especially when that praise comes forth at the time of greatest severity, extremity, and crisis. And where God is, there is liberty.

There's no place for anything being bound. The prison doors burst open. The shackles fell off the hands of Paul, and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's bands were loosed, and the keeper of the prison awakening out of his sleep.

You want to hear what salvation is? You want to hear the classic pattern of what, of how a man genuinely should be saved? And contrast this with our so-called evangelistic meetings, where we're trying by every inducement to get people to come up and accept the Lord. There's Jesus waiting by the wings with his hat in his hand, waiting to be graciously accepted, that some guy might have a new buddy who can help him in the way that he wants to go. Here's the classic pattern of what true salvation means.

It's not a cheap thing. It's not tended cheaply, and it's not received cheaply. Here was the keeper of the prison.

Can you picture him? What a picture of the world. Men trembling over their security, wanting to get through school, get by. Have you ever heard that expression? I think that we ought to hoist that up on our flagpoles.

It's the national standard. Get by. I just want to get by.

I just want to get my little split-level home, my little security, my wife, my kids, my white picket fence. Get by. Have a little church, a congregation.

Get by. The keeper of the prison holding the keys, trembling for his insecurity, waiting to get his pensions, his retirement. The keeper of the prison awakening out of his sleep and seeing the prison doors open.

See, the world has got to see something from us people besides hear something. Drew out the sword and would have killed himself, supposing that the prison had been fled. But Paul cried with a loud voice saying, do thyself no harm, for we're all here.

Cool it, guys. Take it easy. We haven't beat it.

We're still here. It doesn't matter to us whether we're inside the prison or out. How come it doesn't matter, Paul? What is this? Because to be free in Christ is to be free in need.

I tell you guys, God means every word that he speaks. And there's such a thing as being in Christ. That's a lot more than just spouting the conventional theology and church doctrines.

It's a being in Christ, which makes you master over every circumstance. I don't care what your situation is. I don't care what your home life, the condition of your parents, the condition of your pastor, the condition of your friends.

There's a triumph available to every believer over every circumstance who lives a life truly in Christ. Paul says, cool it, guys. We're not anxious to get out.

We're more free sitting in this dungeon than you are, you keeper of the keys, outside. That's what it's all about. And how is it that Paul saw this man ready to take his life when he's in the dungeon and that guy's outside? He sure didn't see it by the natural eye.

He saw it by the Spirit, by the gift of knowledge. How many of you precious children who have had the baptism of the Holy Spirit have begun to operate in the gifts of the Spirit? I attended a Pentecostal church just a week or so ago, and I was talking to the pastor in his office, and I said, Pastor, what do you see as the need of your church? Well, a lot he said, we're getting a lot of people in from the community who just like the church, but they have no knowledge of the Pentecostal dimension. And then we've got second generation young people who were born into Pentecost, who have never themselves really authentically experienced it, and the older people are sort of getting dim, their vision is dim.

We need, he said, the gifts, he said, we need the exercise of the body gifts. And before I could catch myself, you know what I heard leak out of my mouth? I said, yeah, we want the body gifts, but we don't want the body life. Guys, God hasn't given us gifts as little playthings that a little electric should be incorporated into our church services.

Then we say, gee, what a swinging church. The gifts of God are given to set the captives free, to bring sight to the blind, to minister to a sick and to a dying world, to minister to us when we're in a true body of

believers with the masks off, relating honestly to each other in the spirit. I've seen the gift of knowledge exercise over breakfast tables with spoons poised and ready to put the cantaloupe in your mouth, and out comes a choice word of God by the gift of knowledge and wisdom to set someone free, a brother or a sister who's in a predicament to which human knowledge cannot answer.

I tell you, when we'll start to walk like that and believe God like that, we're going to see the full dimension of the Holy Spirit, which is something more than rah, rah, rah. Paul told this man, do yourself no harm, we're all here. And then he, the prison keeper, called for a light and sprang in and came trembling and fell down before Paul and Silas and brought them out and said, sirs, what must I do to be saved? Hallelujah, what a glorious question.

You know, I finally learned that as a teacher. It took me a long time to learn it. I pounded my brains out.

I knocked myself out of the history teacher. I tried to do every cunning, clever thing I could think of to penetrate the indifference of my students. And after some years of foolhardy activity like that, I finally realized that no matter how good my answers were, however clever my information and insight, if the students themselves did not ask the question, it was all in vain.

What's the use of a good answer for someone who has not yet come to the question? And I think our ministry in the world is to bring men to ask that one perfect question, sirs, what must I do to be saved? We're so glib to give them the answer that they can't possibly appreciate and understand, not yet understanding their own condition and need. When this prison keeper holding the keys saw two battered and bruised men inside, more free in dungeons than he was outside them, he came in trembling and fell down before them and cried out, whatever you guys got, I want it. What must I do to be saved? And they said, believe, trust, commit yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now shall be saved in my house. And they spoke unto him the word of the Lord. Then is the time to speak the word of the Lord and to all who are in the house.

And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes and was baptized, he and all his, immediately. And when he had brought them into his house, he stood before them and rejoiced, believing in God and all his house. Guys, that was it.

That was the beginning of the church of Philippi, a woman saved by a riverside, a prison keeper. And that was the whole point of God by the operation of the spirit and by vision revelation, bringing two Jewish men to a Greek city. But you know, because they were faithful, a body of believers was born by the blood, which they shed by the suffering, which they took upon themselves.

A church was born in a Greek city, antithetical to the spirit of God. And later in the correspondence to the body of believers in those cities, we have the precious letter to the Philippians. And there's a verse in that letter that I want to end with today, because you can see I'm a crackpot and a character already, ask your prayer for me.

Because one of the words that I'm not too fond about is Christian. I hope you understand that because we Jews, that word has been so misused and so abused. We think that the crusaders were Christians who came to rape and loot and to victimize our communities in the middle ages.

We think that the inquisitor in the Spanish inquisition, when we were tortured on the rack, that those guys were Christians. We thought that Hitler's Germany was a Christian country. The word Christian for us has

fallen to low repute.

And when people say to me, well, what are you? Are you a Hebrew Christian? You know, I don't quite like that answer. I like to say I'm a Jewish believer in the Messiah Jesus and the God of Israel. But there's a definition in Philippians that I love most of all.

Philippians 3.3. It says, We are the circumcision who rejoice in Christ Jesus, who worship God in the Spirit and have no confidence in the flesh, but who rejoices in Christ Jesus and worship God in the Spirit and is led by the Spirit. It's that content to whom God is speaking today and preparing us for a very heavy hour of affliction that's going to come upon all this world, purifying us and bringing jailers who are sleeping everywhere and prisoners to the knowledge of Jesus Christ. That's my message.

I want you to bow your heads with me this morning. We'll end with prayer.

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